

JOHN DELANEY is rejoining Wycombe Wanderers. The 34-year-old centre half who signed for Bournemouth in May '73, is returning to his former club on a free transfer, manager Brian Lee announced at Wanderers' annual general meeting at the Royal British Legion on Thursday evening.

Delaney spent four successful seasons with Wycombe before going pro' on a two year contract. During his spell at Loakes Park he won 16 England international caps and was regarded as the top centre back on the amateur circuit. One of his greatest assets is his attacking flair from set pieces — something that will give Wanderers an added boost next season.

But Delaney's arrival has meant the departure of last season's captain Alan Phillips, after just one year with the Blues. After a shaky start, the likeable Phillips stamped his character on the Wycombe side. He was one of the key men in both the F.A. Cup run and also the run-in to the Rothmans Isthmian League championship. His aggressive, awkward qualities at centre half will be missed, although Delaney, of course, looks a tailor-made replacement.

Comparing the two players after the annual meeting, Mr. Lee felt Delaney has three things in his favour. He is a good competitor, a very fair player and has the ability to score goals. Phillips, he said, was a great competitor but did not score many goals (he scored five in 59 appearances for Wanderers) and occasionally gave away irresponsible fouls.

Phillips, 28, is likely to rejoin his former colleagues at Hendon along with another Wycombe player last term, Gary Hand.

Questions will undoubtedly be raised about Delaney's decision to rejoin his old club. Some feel that he was past his best when he joined Bournemouth and facts seem to support that opinion. In 1971/72 he made 54 appearances and scored 22 goals. The following year he scored 17 goals from 56 games. In his last season with the club he scored 11 goals in 59 matches. On the other hand it could be argued that, as opponents learned of his aerial ability, the marking became that much tighter.

Mr. Lee made his announcement at the Royal British Legion on Thursday evening.

DELANEY REJOINS OLD CLUB